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News Update re Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

Accurate at 12:00; 16 March 2020

We have set out the following detailed guidance to assist staff and parents at Park Families to feel supported and informed about the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak and to be kept aware of the key measures we have adopted so far.

The situation is rapidly evolving with Government having now arranged daily updates which we will be following closely. Our website www.parkfamilies.co.uk will hold this communication and further updates will be added.

The Coronavirus outbreak that began in Wuhan, China has now been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The Chief Medical Officer for England has confirmed that a total of 1,372 patients in the UK so far have tested positive for the virus, now called Covid-19, with currently 35 fatalities. The Department for Health has described the virus as a 'serious and imminent threat' and raised the public risk level from 'low' to 'moderate'. Covid-19 has now been added to the government's list of 'notifiable diseases'.

What is Coronavirus?

Covid-19 spreads in a similar way to flu, where there is close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has contact with an infected person. It is not an airborne virus. It is the droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes (respiratory secretion) that contain the virus and these are most likely to be the means of transmission, through other people then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes. It is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface or object that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching a door knob or shaking hands then touching face).

Most people infected with the virus have mild symptoms and recover, but some experience more serious illness and may need hospital care. People with weakened immune systems or underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are more vulnerable.

Definition by Public Health England (PHE): Coronavirus is a common type of virus. It typically causes fever and a cough, which may progress to more severe pneumonia, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties in some people. There is currently no specific cure for the new Coronavirus so

treatment is aimed at relieving the symptoms. Whilst the risk of getting the illness is still quite low, this is increasing daily and it is important to self-educate and keep updated.

What are the symptoms?

The NHS advises that symptoms of the Coronavirus usually include:

- Feeling tired
- difficulty breathing
- a high temperature
- a cough

Children under the ages of 10 are least affected. People most affected are people that have underlying health issues and the elderly.

What should we do if someone at our setting needs to self-isolate?

If a member of staff, parent or child has recently returned from one of the following areas they should **follow government advice** and self-isolate (remain at home) for 14 days and contact NHS 111 – even if they do not have any symptoms:

- Wuhan city and Hubei Province, China
- Iran
- Daegu or Cheongdo, Republic of Korea
- Any part of Italy
- Northern Spain

Children should not be dropped off at our settings by anyone who has recently returned from one of these areas – they should make arrangements for another family member or friend to drop them off instead.

Those who have recently returned from one of the areas below do not necessarily need to take any special measures, but if they develop even mild symptoms they should self-isolate and contact NHS 111:

- Cambodia
- China
- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Laos
- Macau
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Republic of Korea – except the areas listed above
- Singapore
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Vietnam

If you know that a child or member of staff has recently returned from one of these areas yet is not following government advice, we would request that they not attend the setting until the required self-isolation period is over.

Should a member of your immediate (nuclear) family be told to self-isolate, then as we have a duty of care to all the other children and staff in our setting, we would ask you not to send your child to nursery, but instead follow a 7 day self-isolation period for them also.

All other children and staff can attend our setting as usual; unless they have been advised otherwise by Public Health officials.

Do we need to close our settings?

Please be reassured, that as stated by the Health Secretary, where someone has been in contact with a suspected case in a childcare setting in most cases, closure of the setting will be unnecessary but this will be a local decision based on various factors including professional advice.

What are we doing to protect staff, children and families in our setting?

As with any widespread infection that could pose a threat to children, parents may be understandably concerned. Social media and word-of-mouth in a community can sometimes be a source of misinformation, particularly if you hear of a suspected case of Coronavirus in a nursery locally. As a company we want to reassure parents who are worried by sharing up-to-date information and advice from reliable sources such as the NHS, PHE and GOV.UK.

Park Families is putting in place rigorous infection control measures that will reduce the exposure for staff and children whilst in the setting, including:

- good basic hygiene practices, including very regular hand-washing (practitioners, children and visitors)
- restricting exposure to the children's environments from parents and visitors
- regular sanitising of the restricted areas where parents hand over children
- staff covering any existing wounds or lesions with waterproof dressings
- personal protective equipment (PPE) such as aprons, gloves and masks are used as needed
- there are procedures in place for rigorous cleaning of equipment and the environment
- awareness of infection control guidance, including the management of infections

Public Health England advises that children and staff should be encouraged to catch sneezes with a tissue, bin the tissue and wash their hands. We will also remind children to:

- wash their hands after outside breaks
- before meals and snack times
- after using the toilet
- when they arrive at the setting
- at the end of the day before they go home

Where we do not have immediate access to soap and hot water to hand at the time, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be used instead. These products will have at least 60% alcohol and will be kept out of the reach of children. We will discourage and raise awareness of everyone touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands and we will not allow sharing of any items that come into contact with mouths such as cups and bottles.

Key information sources

The Department for Education has launched a new helpline for early year providers, schools and colleges – as well as parents, carers and young people – who have questions about Coronavirus. If you have specific questions about the virus, you can contact the helpline on 0800 046 8687 or via email: dfc.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

These sites will have all the official information you will need and should ideally be the only source of information you refer to:

- Covid-19 – Guidance for Educational Settings (DfE)
- Coronavirus: latest information and advice (Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England)
- Coronavirus (2019-cCoV) (NHS)
- Coronavirus FAQs (NHS)
- Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) – what you need to know (Public Health England)

Park Families along with other businesses in the nursery sector are increasingly concerned about protecting our services, looking after our staff and our overall finances should the Covid-19 outbreak seriously worsen. Further details on the help announced in the Chancellor's budget on 11 March 2020 regarding changes to sick pay and business interruption support are awaited. The National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) will be keeping us informed.

As mentioned above, the situation is rapidly evolving with Government now planning daily updates which we will follow closely. Our website www.parkfamilies.co.uk will hold this communication and further updates will be added.

Jon Stuart

**Chief Executive
Park Families**